

Effects of Records Management Policy on Service Delivery at Kakamega County

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Abstract

Records are important assets in organisational management. However, for them to be a valuable asset, they need to be managed with the help of a policy framework that provides professional guidance for their effective management. The aim of the study was to examine current records management policies at Kakamega County as a key tool in the delivery of County activities and programmes. The study, which is qualitative in nature, adopted the case study design. Data was collected using semi-structured interviews. The study sample size was 103. The study used thematic analysis to compile data into themes derived from the research questions. Data was reported using descriptive text, direct quotations, and tables where applicable. The findings of the study were that: records management had a significant impact on County activities and programmes; the records management department did not receive adequate support from County executives towards implementation of existing records management policies; and the County lacked a comprehensive policy framework for managing its records. The study concludes that the existence of a sound records management policy impacts positively on County activities and programmes, thus ensuring the provision of services to its citizens. The study proposed a comprehensive records management policy framework for managing records at Kakamega County, thus facilitating service delivery to its citizens.

Keywords: *Framework, Policy, Records Management, Service Delivery*

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1.0 Introduction

Records are fundamental to any organization, regardless of being public or private, as they provide verification of transactions, decisions, and activities carried out throughout time. Even though the Kenyan Government has acknowledged the critical role of records through numerous laws, including the Public Archives and Documentation Service Act (Cap 19) and the Records Disposal Act (Cap 14), not every public institution has developed and enforced policies for the suitable creation, maintenance, utilization, and disposal of records (Ambira, 2016; Mampe & Kalusopa, 2012; Wamukoya & Mutula, 2005). The chasm between the establishment of a legislative framework and its actual use inside institutions has consistently diminished the efficacy of records as strategic assets for organisations in various public sectors across the nation.

The 2010 Constitution of Kenya not only established the National Government and restricted the number of ministries but also formed County Governments, which supplanted the previous local government entities, including Nairobi County and forty-six (46) more counties. This decentralization process included the transfer of responsibilities, staff, resources, and, importantly, documentation from the abolished municipal authorities to the newly established county administrations. Burugu (2010) asserts that the decentralized governmental framework necessitates not just the historical documentation acquired from local administrations but also systems for overseeing the new records produced by counties during their daily functions. To achieve success, a suitable records management framework is essential, including rules and processes for records generation, storage, retrieval, and destruction (Burugu, 2010). In the absence of such infrastructure, counties jeopardize their institutional memory, diminish accountability systems, and threaten the consistency of service provision to residents.

In spite of the essential contribution of records management to institutional accountability and operational effectiveness, county administrations, especially Kakamega County, show little attention to the oversight of documents (Mwangi, 2017). Ongwenyi et al. (2018) highlighted that inadequate records management within county government has hindered service delivery, leading to delays in service provision, obstacles in accessing information for decision-making, and less responsibility to the populace. The deficient status of records management within Kakamega County has therefore compromised the efficient and effective provision of County activities and programs, affecting services to local inhabitants in domains including health, education, land administration, and tax collection.

The research aims to evaluate the records management strategy that would connect effective records management with service provision in Kakamega County. As to IRMT (2009), a records management policy framework includes guidelines on the production and capture of documents, their organization, storage, appraisal, retention and disposal, preservation, digitisation, access, human resource development, and security. These rules provide protocols for the efficient administration of records, including electronic records, which are more important to county functions as e-government projects proliferate. Kemoni (2007) asserts that the lack of a robust records management policy framework may result in subpar records management practices, hence exacerbating corruption, misappropriation of public assets, ineffective governance, and delays in delivering services to the populace. Effectively crafted policies and processes guarantee the establishment and preservation of suitable records to assist the County in its operations, including citizen services, while fulfilling its accountability and transparency responsibilities to residents and regulatory entities. In light of this context, the research aimed to analyse existing policies and their effects on service provision in Kakamega

County, intending to provide a thorough policy framework that rectifies the identified deficiencies.

2.0 Materials and Methods

Research Approach and Design

The study used a qualitative approach, which facilitated the researcher's examination, interpretation, and comprehension of the phenomena by offering comprehensive information, resulting in a sophisticated grasp of the research dilemma. A qualitative approach, concentrating on the personal appraisal of attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours, was especially fitting for uncovering persons' feelings about the policy framework critical for advancing recordkeeping as a crucial mechanism in executing County operations and programs. This strategy facilitated participants in conveying, in their own language, the effects of records management practices on their everyday activities and, hence, the services offered to the public.

The research was performed using a case study approach, with a specific concentration on the Kakamega County Government. This paradigm facilitated the researcher in articulating and expounding upon the vital significance of an integrated strategy for record management and its implications for service provision at the County, rather than engaging in a fleeting and exhaustive analysis across many counties. The case study approach was fitting since it enabled the convergence of viewpoints from diverse staff tiers within a specific, limited organisational framework.

Study Location

The research was carried out at the Kakamega County Government, one of the 47 county administrations formed after the enactment of the 2010 Constitution. Kakamega County, situated in the erstwhile Western Province of Kenya, was chosen because to its substantial population and the resultant huge amount of data it produces and

oversees in providing devolved services to its inhabitants.

“County faces more risks, such as reduced institutional memory, increased susceptibility to corruption, and weaker accountability, when information and records are not properly created, described, captured, and managed”

Target Population

The population of interest consisted of one hundred and three (103) officers recruited from Top Management, Chief Officers, Action Officers, Records Managers, Registry Staff, and Clerical Personnel. These officials were chosen since they together represent both the governance and operational aspects of records management and service delivery within the County, providing the research a holistic cross-section of institutional viewpoints.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The research used purposive sampling and census sampling methods to choose the sample. Kombo and Tromp (2006, p. 82) observed that with purposive sampling, the investigator intentionally selects a cohort of individuals deemed trustworthy for the investigation. They furthermore observed that purposive sampling is a method that chooses examples abundant in information for comprehensive facts about the primary topics under investigation. Purposive sampling was used to choose Top Managers, Chief Officers, Action Officers, Clerical Officers, Records Managers, and Registry Personnel. Senior Executives, Chief Officers, and Action Officers were chosen due to their participation in the planning of County

initiatives and programs, decision-making processes, training, staff recruitment, resource distribution, execution of County policies and programs, and assessment of the effectiveness of County activities and programs. Records Managers, Registry Personnel, and Clerical Officers were chosen due to their direct engagement in the daily administration of records at Kakamega County, including filing, retrieval, storage, and disposal.

The researcher further collected data from the complete intended population, which included Top Managers, Chief Officers, Action Officers, Records Managers, Registry Employees, and Clerical Officers. A census sampling approach was used since the target population was quite small. In this scenario, every member of the designated divisions was provided with an equal chance to participate in the research. The advantages of census sampling lie in its inclusion of the whole target population, rather than just a portion, which bolsters the validity and completeness of the results.

Data Collection Instruments

The strategy used for data acquisition in this study included the execution of semi-structured interviews. The choice for interviews arose due to their proficiency in extracting complex information, their versatility in tailoring enquiries according to respondents' answers, their simplicity in gathering personal data that might not be voluntarily revealed in written form, and their superior management of the sample, permitting the researcher to investigate more thoroughly for understanding.

Data Collection Procedure

The scholar engaged with the respondents directly, set an appointment, and performed a congenial and uncomplicated face-to-face interview lasting around twenty (20) minutes. Throughout the interview process, the interviewer conversed with the respondents and meticulously documented their answers for analysis and

interpretation, guaranteeing that significant points were highlighted and that every question was thoroughly addressed prior to completing each session.

Ethical Consideration

The ethical standards upheld throughout the study were the avoidance of plagiarism, obtaining research approval from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI), and ensuring the confidentiality and privacy of participants. In this scenario, individuals were not required to provide their identities on the interview form to safeguard the anonymity of the information sources. A official correspondence was sent to the participants, functioning as both a sign of esteem and a method to get informed consent for their participation in the study. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any moment without encountering any negative consequences.

3.0 Results and Discussion

Effectiveness of Current Records Management Practices in Supporting County Activities and Programmes

The study requested records managers and registry staff to express the impact of records management on County functions and projects. The findings reveal that four (4) records managers and fourteen (14) registry staff asserted that records management enhanced County initiatives and programs by facilitating decision-making, providing evidential support, mitigating litigation risks, preserving corporate memory, and fostering accountability and transparency. Records Manager 1 (RM1) asserted:

Records management has greatly supported the County activities; information is needed for reference and to provide evidence on how departments spend the national and local funds. Without records then most

of the activities would be difficult if not impossible.

The Human Resource Manager also noted:

How can you know the performance of your staff if you have nothing to refer to? Some activities like staff appraisal, recruitment, promotion, and retirement totally depend on the information contained in the personnel files.

This statement asserts that documentation is crucial for providing the necessary information for human resource management. It further confirms that documentation enables the Human Resource Manager to devise workforce distribution strategies and evaluate employee performance, while the management of personnel records ensures a comprehensive and detailed employment history is readily available for each employee. These results indicate that documentation supports almost all administrative and operational activities within the County, ranging from budgeting to program assessment.

ISO (2001) emphasises the need of understanding the reasons for the creation and capture of records, as well as identifying the individual accountable for executing the required actions. The research results indicated that well maintained records are essential for sound governance and need a reliable information source to facilitate decision-making and accountability. The research further confirmed that data was acquired from both the National Government and the County Government. Data from the County Government mostly stemmed from the finance department and the property register, but other departments, including research, human resources, surveying, and physical planning, constituted other significant information sources within the County. These documents were of either physical or digital formats, or a combination of both, illustrating the County's inconsistent shift from traditional to electronic recording techniques.

The research found that, although the evaluation of records management within the departments was mostly positive, it encountered issues that required resolution. This discovery aligns with the observations of Kalusopa and Ngulube (2012) and Abuki (2014), who assert that inadequately handled records might pose a risk, obstructing operations and depleting organisational resources. If not addressed, these obstacles threaten to undermine the advantages of enhanced decision-making, accountability, and institutional memory that the respondents regarded as the merits of effective records management. The County Government must thus implement suitable measures and make sound choices to address the difficulties it has in maintaining its records, especially regarding resources and executive backing for the records function.

Impact of Records Management on Service Delivery

The research further asked participants to indicate the influence of records management on service provision. The results indicated that records management influenced service delivery via performance, transparency, efficiency, effectiveness, and safeguarding people's rights. Top Manager 1 (TM1) stated:

Records act as a true reflection of the County activities. If files are well managed then we are able to account for County services in a transparent manner. It is clear that cases of corruption and embezzlement of County resources has greatly reduced.

This statement affirms that effective records management establishes the basis for responsibility, safeguarding of human rights, and heightened public knowledge of their rights, while also promoting accountability and openness in County operations and initiatives. This discovery aligns with the conclusions of Luthuli and Kalusopa (2017), Chaterera (2013), and Palmer (2000), who also determined that effective records

management underpins accountability, safeguards human rights, enhances citizen awareness of their rights, and guarantees quality public service delivery. Collectively, these results establish records management as more than just a clerical task; it serves as a governance tool intrinsically connected to the quality, transparency, and integrity of services provided to residents.

Policy and Procedures for Records Management

On whether the County had a policy for records management, six (6) chief officers, two (2) top managers, six (6) action officers, nine (9) registry staff, and eight (8) clerks stated that the County did not have a policy for managing its records. Registry Staff 5 (RS5) stated: "Personally I can't say the County has a policy for records management because I have never seen it. We only use Article 14 and Article 19 to manage our records."

Table 1

Respondents' Awareness of an Existing Records Management Policy at Kakamega County, by Cadre

Cadre	Stated County had no records management policy	Stated County had a records management policy
Top Managers	2	2
Chief Officers	6	0
Action Officers	6	3
Records Managers	0	2
Registry Staff	9	5
Clerical Officers	8	6
Total	31	18

This disparity in knowledge among respondents, with some ignorant of any policy and others expressing just a portion of one, is noteworthy. It implies that, even when policy provisions exist in Kakamega County, they are not consistently communicated, implemented, or understood across cadres, limiting their practical impact on day-to-day record management.

The results demonstrated that Kakamega County had certain records management rules and procedures in place, and that access to documents was regulated by their regulatory and intellectual

Eighteen (18) respondents, comprising two (2) top managers, three (3) action officers, two (2) records managers, five (5) registry staff, and six (6) clerks, stated that the County had a records management policy. Table 1 summarises this distribution by cadre. Those who indicated there were policies noted that the key aspects covered disposition of records, records creation, access to records, filing systems, storage of records, and retrieval of records. The key policies and guidelines followed in managing records focused on disposal, filing, storage, and access. Records Manager 4 (RM4) stated:

"Yes we have a records management policy but it does not cover all the phases of the life cycle of records. We only have policies on records disposal, security and organisation of records."

content. The research also found that retention and disposal schedules allowed records managers to assess the retention length of documents and recommend an appropriate approach for the timely destruction of ephemeral information.

This conclusion is congruent with that of Wamukoya (2017), IRMT (2009), Shepherd and Yeo (2003), Read and Ginn (2011), and Yusof (2009), all of whom emphasize the need of county governments having a complete policy framework in place to manage the life cycle of records. The results revealed that Kakamega County only

followed policies and procedures for disposal, filing, storage, and access, and that the County needs to implement a complete policy framework that covers the whole records life cycle, from creation to ultimate disposal. This is consistent with IRMT (2009), which states that regulatory and policy issues should address records creation and use, acquisition, appraisal, disaster recovery and business continuity, disposal, security and privacy, records management staff training, records storage, and electronic records management. The study also agrees with Mwanyungu (2018) that the County would benefit from implementing a records management policy by making information more accessible, facilitating effective performance of activities, providing continuity in the event of a disaster, and protecting records from unauthorised access. Similarly, Wamukoya (2017) highlights the essential parts of a policy framework as security of records, access and use, retention, survey, assessment, storage of records, disaster management planning, electronic records management, and staff development.

These three thematic findings demonstrate a consistent pattern: Kakamega County's records management procedures are operating effectively enough for employees to recognise their value, but the lack of a thorough, well-communicated policy framework is preventing that value from being fully realised in terms of service delivery, accountability, and the defence of institutional and citizen interests.

4.0 Conclusion

According to the study, records management supported County activities and efforts, making records a vital resource for the County. As a result, the County Government must develop a comprehensive document management plan. Every aspect of the records life cycle, including production, administration, access, usage, and destruction, must be covered by the policy

framework. According to the study, the County's good governance and service delivery including the defence of citizens' rights, enhanced strategic planning, stronger problem-solving, accountability and transparency, citizen participation in decision-making, and effective and efficient service delivery were greatly impacted by proper records management. However, the primary obstacles keeping the County from fully reaping these advantages continue to be the lack of executive-level support and the fragmented character of current policy provisions.

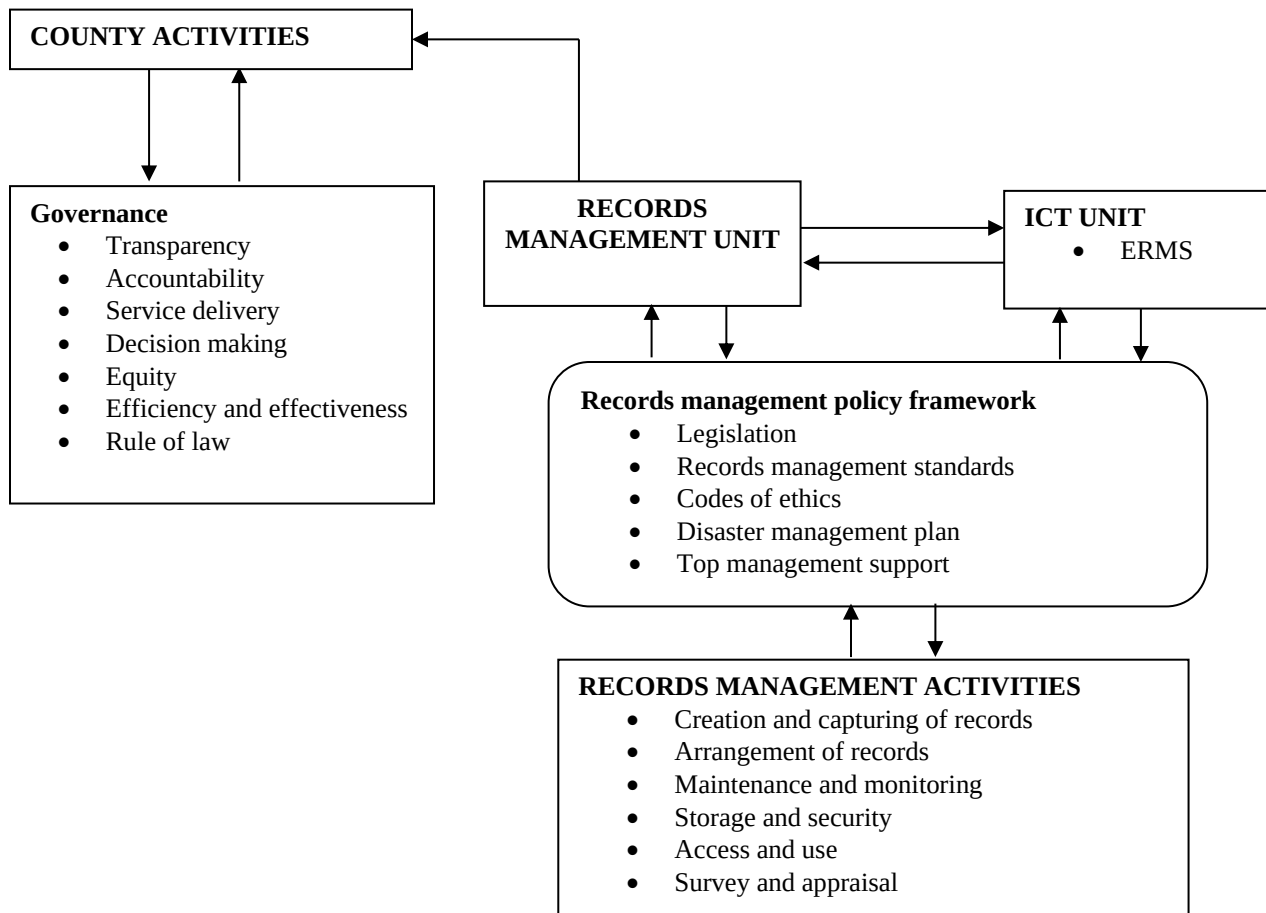
5.0 Recommendations

The County faces more risks, such as reduced institutional memory, increased susceptibility to corruption, and weaker accountability, when information and records are not properly created, described, captured, and managed. Based on the study results, the researcher suggests a framework for records management policies that would improve Kakamega County Government's accountability, transparency, and service delivery.

The ICT unit, records management unit, records management activities, records management policy framework, and good governance are the six (6) interconnected topics that make up the framework. The County creates a variety of documents while carrying out its mandates and operations. For organization and upkeep, these documents are moved to the records management unit. The ICT section uses an electronic records management system to collect and organise electronic records. Records managers may carry out every aspect of records management, from production to disposal, thanks to the records management policy framework. Effective record-keeping would allow county authorities to carry out their responsibilities and guarantee the delivery of services to stakeholders and county residents. The suggested framework is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Proposed policy framework for records management and good governance



1. Instead of the disjointed, incomplete provisions currently in place, Kakamega County Government should create and formally adopt a comprehensive records management policy covering the entire records life cycle, including creation, capturing, organization, storage, appraisal, retention and disposition, preservation, digitisation, access, human resource development, and security. This would provide a single, authoritative point of reference for employees at all levels.
2. Since the research indicated that a major obstacle to the successful implementation of current rules was a lack of executive support, county executives should provide the records management department sufficient financial, human, and technological resources as well as visible leadership support.
3. To narrow the knowledge gap shown by the varying answers on whether a policy exists at all, the County should engage in staff training and ongoing sensitisation on records management policy and procedures across all cadres.
4. To support the increasing amount of digital records and match records procedures with the County's larger e-government goals, the County should increase investment in its electronic records management system inside the ICT unit.

5. To stay responsive to changes in technology, regulations, and the County's changing service delivery requirements, the suggested policy framework should be examined and modified on a regular basis.

The value of these recommendations lies in their potential to strengthen transparency and accountability, reduce opportunities for corruption and embezzlement, safeguard citizens' rights, and improve the overall efficiency and effectiveness of service

delivery at Kakamega County. Their implications extend beyond Kakamega County itself: as a case study of a devolved unit grappling with legacy and newly generated records, the findings offer a transferable model that other county governments in Kenya facing similar records management challenges could adapt to strengthen their own governance and service delivery outcomes.

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